

**Marta Daniels' Testimony in Support of SB753: An Act Concerning the
Counting of Incarcerated Persons to Determine Legislative Districts
March 11, 2021**

TO: GAE Committee Co-Chairs Sen. Flexer and Rep. Fox, Vice Chairs Sen. Haskell and Rep. Thomas, and Ranking Members Sen. Sampson and Rep. Mastrofrancesco and Honorable Members of the GAE Committee

Please ensure that our ten-year census will accurately and unbiasedly reflect the true populations of the districts we are counting by changing and eliminating the current process of how we assign residence to temporary prison inmates.

Because 2020 was our once-a-decade census year from which we will redraw our electoral district lines, it is imperative that the General Assembly acts this session to eliminate this unfair counting practice, or we will lock in another ten years of skewed, unequally populated districts.

Connecticut, like many other states, counts prisoners as living in the town where they are incarcerated when it draws its legislative districts. This practice, known as “prison gerrymandering” causes a transfer of political power from communities of color (where most prisoners originate) to white areas (where most of prisons are located) and should be corrected before lawmakers begin re-drawing the maps.

Because most incarcerated people come from cities, counting them in the predominantly white towns where the state’s prisons are often located deflates the legislative representation of cities and thus, disenfranchises the predominantly Black and brown voters who live in them.

“The injustices of gerrymandering are enormous. It’s robbery in the greatest sense of the word,” said Garry Monk, a veteran’s advocate and a member of the New Haven NAACP. The white communities benefit financially from the prison’s presence, but the prisoners themselves have no real representation while incarcerated.

Alex Boudreau, at the Yale law school said that “They’re counted in these prison communities that they have no real contact with. So they don’t have meaningful representation. And it harms the communities they’re from, because they’re not counting toward the political power that those places ought to have.”

Ten other states, including New York, have overturned the practice. And Secretary of the State Denise Merrill has publicly supported the bill to ban it in Connecticut.

Please do the right thing: support an end to prison gerrymandering with SB753.

Marta Daniels
Chester, CT 06412